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Language and Care: Tensions for Japanese Teachers and Foreign Students in Japanese Schools

Introduction

Current Japanese schools have maintained the homogeneous discourse, based on the majority, ethnic Japanese, embedded in the national curriculum. In addition to the homogeneous discourse, Tsuneyoshi (2003) argues that Japanese schools have an educational philosophy of egalitarianism, asserting that “all children are treated the same.” Egalitarianism in schools refers to working to provide the same materials for all students, teaching all at the same pace, and, frequently not offering additional support for particular students (Gordon, 2006). In other words, students need to share a high level of commonalities, such as a common language, a shared belief system and behavioral norms, family stability, and a sense of belonging (Tsuneyoshi, 2001). Shimizu, Sakai, Shimizu, and Dotera (1999, cited in Gordon, 2006) also mention that the belief of egalitarianism makes it difficult for teachers to recognize the unique qualities and needs of each student.

The myth of homogeneous student populations and the philosophy of egalitarianism have been challenged by the enrollment of foreign students, mainly from Latin America. Since the late 1980s, Japanese communities have become multicultural because of the increasing numbers of people whose physical characteristics show them to be non-Japanese (Yamanaka, 1993). Differences these foreign students bring to the schools are not only their physical characteristics, such as hair and eye colors, but also their cultural heritage, including the native language, and values, as well as behaviors.

Of course, schools have always been exposed to “no-traditional” and different students and their needs. Most of them were domestic indigenous/minority groups, old-time foreigners born in Japan, and those who have special needs, as well as Japanese returnees from overseas. Yet, since the 1990s, schools have been required to shift directions because of the drastic increase in newcomer immigrant students (Kojima, 2007; Ōta, 2000; Satō, 1996). Today, schools must confront the fact that most newcomer students do not understand the language of the curriculum, pedagogy, instruction, and school life in general. This study examines some of the challenges of establishing and maintaining a caring relationship between ethnic Japanese teachers and foreign students in the face of Japanese language and cultural barriers through the lens of Noddings’s (1992) ethics of care. This theoretical framework discusses a teacher as a caregiver and a foreign student as a cared-for. The caring relationship is a mutual process of sharing the sense of caring between the two parties that is a teacher and a foreign student. Foreign students are also described interchangeably with Japanese as Second Language (JSL) students due to their presence in supplemental JSL classes.

Crystallization of the Problem

Japanese classrooms are becoming more increasingly diverse with more and more students speaking languages other than Japanese. A survey by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and

Technology (MEXT) demonstrates that 25,411 students were considered “foreign students needed for Japanese as a second language (JSL) instruction.” Out of 25,411 students, major native languages are Portuguese (10,206, 38.5%), Chinese (5,051, 19.9%), Spanish (3,484, 14.6%) (MEXT, 2008, August).

The crux of the matter is that most teachers placed in Japanese classrooms do not speak any of these languages. However there are arrangements for students to learn JSL. In addition to that, there are language counselors who visit each school averagely once a month. These arrangements we consider are not adequate to enable teachers to meet the needs of foreign students in Japanese classrooms. Japanese teachers are generally viewed as adults fully responsible for students’ academic and school life therefore their inability to speak other languages could become a barrier to effective interaction with foreign students. Thus, a teacher is placed in a position where he or she wants to be of help to all students, but may not be able to reach students who have low Japanese language proficiency. Therefore, the main research question for this study is to explore what challenges teachers face in establishing and maintaining a caring relationship with students.

The Study Rationale

This study focuses on Japanese teachers’ pedagogical and relational strategies to accommodate the needs of foreign students. On one hand, through the homogenous curriculum, teachers are serving as conduits through which hegemonic ideas of “Japaneseness” are inculcated into students, which, by and large, marginalizes foreign students. On the other hand, some teachers try to establish a caring relationship with their students, regardless of their nationality. This study is intended to inform teachers, parents, school administrators, and policymakers about how critical language is for integration. The study will assist in improving possibilities for bridging the language gap to ensure that non-Japanese speakers are not marginalized in the schools.

Theoretical Framework

Pedagogy of Relations

Pedagogy of relations focuses on the importance of social interaction in order to facilitate dialogue and build trust between teachers and students. It is one major way that many teachers and students use to solve problems and build a caring environment. This would also aid in changing the perception of people as “others.”

Sidorkin (2002) proposes the pedagogy of relations, which places human relationships at the center of education in order to encourage motivations for teaching and learning. He uses the economic anthropology of schooling to illustrate the importance of relational pedagogy to learning motivation.

Gordon, Benner, and Noddings (1996) provide the definition of caring as

a set of relational practices that foster mutual recognition and realization, growth, development, protection, empowerment, and human community, culture, and possibility...these practices are required in relationships that are devoted—for however short or long a period of time—to helping educate, nurture, develop, and empower, assisting others to cope with their weaknesses while affirming their strengths. Caring relationships are also those that foster well-being in the midst of change, crisis, vulnerability, or suffering. Caring practices always involve receptivity, engrossment ‘(to

make large or visible, to show up),’ attunement, engagement, intelligence, skill, shrewdness, and knowledge. (p. xiii)

Noddings (1992) defines a caring relationship as “a connection or encounter between two human beings—a carer and a recipient of care, or cared-for” (1992, p. 15). For the sake of consistency this study will adopt the terms caregiver for teachers and cared-for for foreign students. She explains that caring is only established when both parties complete their role either as a caregiver or a cared-for. If the care recipient does not receive caring from the caregiver, caring is not completed but is simply a relationship between the two. The caring relationship, thus, is a mutual process of sharing the sense of caring between the two parties. Noddings (1992) indicates that features of caregiver include the conscious effort of engrossment on the cared-for and commitment to the cared-for, and motivational shift from a self to the cared-for.

Noddings (1992) illuminates moral education as including four major components from the perspective of ethics of care: Modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation. First, modeling means that the caregiver should demonstrate how to care within the relationship with the cared-for. Moreover, those who have experiences of being the cared-for can also be the caregiver. Second, dialogue in Noddings’ view is similar to Paulo Freire’s (2003) dialogue of an open-ended form of conversation. Dialogue guides the two parties to reach well-informed decisions through sharing the knowledge each party has. In this process, dialogue also fosters caring relationships because a caregiver shares his or her knowledge with friendly attitudes and a cared-for responds to the caregiver in a manner that pleases the caregiver. Third, practice creates certain attitudes and shapes particular mentalities through training and experiences in particular fields and institutions. Thus, practice in caring is critical because the preparation for a caring relationship needs skills and experiences of care giving. Last, confirmation from ethics of care perspective means that confirmation from a person motivates others to develop the self. Confirmation is an act of a person that allows others to realize that this person is committed to watch actions others take to develop the self. Thus, confirmation creates a relation of trust between these two parties.

Tarlow (1996) identifies eight concepts of the caring process from a grounded theory approach from interviews conducted with eight-four participants. She indicates that caring is an ongoing process occurring in the past, present, and future. The eight phases include time, being there, talking/dialogue, sensitivity, acting in the best interest of the other, caring as feeling, caring as doing, and reciprocity.

Tarlow (1996) further specifies these eight concepts of caring between teachers and students in a school setting. First, providing time means the actual time teachers and students spend in interaction during the regular school days. Being there refers to teachers being present, accessible, approachable, and welcoming to help the person cared for. The third category, talking/dialogue, means communications and dialogue that allow two parties, caregiver and cared-for, to build and maintain a caring relationship. The first three phases have been described by Owens and Ennis (2005) as the beginning processes and prerequisites for caring which they also note is in consonance with in accordance with ethics of care by Noddings (1992). Fourth, developing sensitivity between teachers and students means teachers’ intention to be conscious of moods and signs of change in students. Teachers act in the best interest of students to ensure that their assistance guides students to be successful. Caring as feeling means that caring is both an activity and a positive feeling of concern and affection about the person cared for that is students. Caring as doing means the helpful activities of

caring for others. Finally, caring refers to reciprocal relationships which involves some form of giving back

Furthermore, Saitō (cited in Kobayashi, 2009) argues that caring plays a role in supporting students in four functions of teachers in class: teaching, support, guidance, and learning. Caring is teachers' relational response to needs of learners, which characterizes the supporting function in class. Teachers' guidance allows students to complete their learning and this learning needs caring and support, in addition to teaching.

Methods

The duration of this study was about three months from mid-November 2007 to early February 2008. Sites selected for the study included Sakura Junior High School and Ran Elementary School. About three months were spent in Sakura and one day was spent in Ran. Classroom observations were done in Sakura for a total of 14 periods in social studies lessons. Participant-observations in the JSL classroom were conducted in Ran for a total of 6 periods. Interviews were done with three informants: one social studies teacher, one Japanese teacher, and one language counselor. Informal conversations with JSL teachers in Ran were also added as data.

Discussions of Results

A Caring Relationship in Regular Classes

In his social studies class at Sakura Junior High School, Mr. Harada was one of the caring teachers for foreign students, a Brazilian girl (Wakayama) in the seventh grade and a Turkish boy (Aslan) in the ninth grade. Both students have lived in Japan for two to four years and needed supplemental JSL instruction. As they did not have a kanji (Chinese characters) orthographic background, kanji was one of the most challenging parts of Japanese learning (Mori, 1999; Mori, Satō, & Shimizu, 2007; Yamashita & Maru, 2000) for them. Kanji is a logographic character holding both meanings and sounds. One kanji has more than one meaning and one pronunciation. Kanji words with multiple meanings and sounds also feature linguistic functions, visual complexity, and the combinations of a few kanji words necessary to represent concepts existing in Japanese language (Coulmas, 1989; Just & Carpenter, 1987; Mori et al., 2007). Kanji plays a crucial role in the written form of Japanese language (Shibatani, 1990; Mori et al., 2007). Therefore, acquiring a working knowledge of written kanji is important for both Japanese native speakers and language learners (Mori et al., 2007).

In social studies class, Mr. Harada tried to write hiragana, Japanese domestic syllabic characters, on top of kanji on the blackboard, to help the JSL students to read kanji. Hiragana is the first 48 syllabic characters any Japanese language learners learn at first, and they then switch hiragana words into kanji characters for advanced learning. A native speaker of Japanese is supposed to master 1,006 kanji characters by the age of 12 in schools. It is common that basic kanji characters are written without hiragana, including in textbooks and school documents. Even though Japanese students and teachers read and write basic kanji characters in daily life, this is very challenging for foreign students with limited language proficiency. On the other hand, the rule of using basic kanji characters in reading, writing, and speaking is so common among Japanese teachers and students that they would not imagine that foreign students would have problems with these basic kanji. In fact, Mr. Harada was the only teacher who tried to write hiragana on top of kanji on the blackboard for basic kanji characters in

classes including foreign students. Even he did not always do so, when he did not pay special attention to the presence of a foreign student in his class of 40 students.

In addition, Mr. Harada used photos or drew pictures on the blackboard to reinforce keywords visually. Moreover, when students started doing handouts, the teacher always offered a further explanation to the Brazilian student. He said:

For example, because Wakayama, a Brazilian girl, is in the class, I try to write hiragana on the blackboard as much as I can. I try to talk to her in class, asking 'Do you understand here and what about there?' After all, trying to help her participate in class would be good for all foreign students who have some understanding of the Japanese language.

A Brazilian language counselor for JSL students, Ms. Noda showed enthusiasm when I told her that Mr. Harada gave his Turkish student (Aslan) red circles for correct answers in small quizzes when the answers were written in hiragana. Mr. Harada told Aslan that the teacher would give him red circles to answers written in hiragana if some kanji characters were too difficult for Aslan to write. The teacher wanted the student to get good scores on small quizzes on which he could earn partial credits for the final grade. When told that, Aslan was motivated to work for better scores on quizzes.

In most cases, answers to tests should be written in kanji characters as long as the textbook writes the words in kanji. Since the textbook is used for ninth graders, a higher level of reading and writing in kanji is required in all nine core subjects. This means that the answers should be correct both in knowledge and in the right kanji writing. Ms. Noda wondered why answers written in hiragana or katakana (the other 48 Japanese syllabic characters used for foreign words) were considered incorrect although tests asked for correct knowledge, not the writing itself. She believed that if tests checked each student's knowledge, correct answers in hiragana should also be acceptable. If students did not get points in writing in hiragana, their motivations for studying would be lessened. She felt that some sort of special arrangement would be helpful for Japanese students as well.

Providing additional assistance related to their language proficiency meets some concepts in Tarlow's eight caring characters. The prerequisite for caring, providing time, being there, and talking/dialogue with students, were completed for both cases. In Wakayama's example, providing time and being there can be reflected in the fact that Mr. Harada spent extra time addressing her needs while students were working on a handout by themselves in class. He intentionally went to talk to Wakayama to ensure that she understood what students were supposed to do with that handout. The other caring concepts were also observed in both examples. In both cases, Mr. Harada showed his sensitivity to understand their issues with language proficiency. Based on his understanding of their issues, the teacher acted in the best interest of both of them by giving additional guidance on handouts or red circles for incomplete answers written in hiragana. These special treatments are the teacher's actions undertaken to help them with caring. Tarlow's concepts end with reciprocity, a reciprocal relationship between a caregiver and a cared-for. Reciprocity can be demonstrated by the response from a cared-for to a caregiver. Without observing Wakayama's response, it cannot be concluded that the reciprocity between Mr. Harada and Wakayama was completed. She was rather quiet and not very participatory in class so there were no observable responses. On the other hand, in the Aslan's case, reciprocity was observed from his active participation in answering in hiragana on quizzes. Mr. Harada felt Aslan was motivated to try harder on quizzes when he accepted his responses in hiragana. Here the cared-for showed his willingness to participate in the caregiver's arrangement which is a form of giving back.

In addition to taking their language handicap into consideration, Mr. Harada tried to connect students to his lecture and establish a caring relationship. On various occasions, Mr. Harada indicated his attention and care to Aslan by mentioning something related to Turkey. For instance, when the class was learning about the European Union (EU), Mr. Harada said, "Turkey is applying for membership in the EU." As a response to his teacher's care and attention, Aslan often voluntarily answered questions. One question was, "What would be the symbol of Japan?" and Aslan answered "Samurai." On another occasion, when students were learning about the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization world heritage sites, Aslan said, "Cappadocia." The teacher then pointed out to the class that Cappadocia is as one of the world heritage sites in Turkey.

In this case, each party, the teacher as a caregiver and the student as a cared-for, responded and played their expected roles, either as a caregiver or a care receiver. Aslan was one of the active respondents to random questions Mr. Harada posed. Unlike the other observations that most JSL students tended to be quiet and nearly invisible in class, Aslan was the opposite. He was able to show his uniqueness in the classroom as one who had a Turkish background. His active participation was his sign of reciprocity to his teacher who introduced his culture to the entire class.

The environment which encouraged him to speak up in class could be attributed to many factors. First, he seemed to have built cordial relationships within his homeroom. Second, he belonged to the soccer club of which Mr. Harada was the coach. Through soccer practices, they got to know each other. Finally, Mr. Harada encouraged him to be involved in class participation. He told me during the interview: "Because he is from Turkey and he is in my class, I raise issues related to him. Thanks to him, there are issues we can think about with interest."

The first two factors are associated with his interpersonal relationship with his classmates and Mr. Harada which has grown over time. In contrast, the last factor is the teacher's arrangement to discuss issues in Turkey, so that Aslan might feel included and the rest of the students learn about where he came from. The teacher's arrangement is an example of sensitivity and acted in the best interest of Aslan. Tarlow (1996) states that "sensitivity to others entailed a variety of emotional and cognitive tasks that in turn depended on a person willing to care" (p. 67).

Difficulties in Building Caring Relationships

As Tarlow (1996) points out, talking/dialogue is one of three prerequisites for caring to begin. But what if the talking/dialogue is interrupted by the lack of a common language between a caregiver and a cared-for? The following example indicates how much the language translators are necessary for Japanese teachers to communicate with JSL students to understand their needs.

Ms. Noda is a Brazilian language counselor who visited over 80 public elementary and junior high schools in the region for the Board of Education. One of her daily work duties is translation service between Japanese teachers and foreign students and parents. Japanese teachers have knowledge of English as a second language, regardless of their actual English communication skills. On the other hand, most foreign students and their parents in the study did not come from English-speaking countries. The majority came from Brazil or some other South American countries, China, the Philippines, and Turkey. Thus, native languages of these students and parents were diverse: Portuguese, Spanish, Chinese, Tagalog, and Turkish.

For students, JSL classes were offered for foreign students with limited language proficiency. With the class, the interaction with Japanese classmates in school helps them develop basic communication skills in Japanese. However, most parents were incompetent in speaking, reading, and writing in Japanese.

As a result, no common language existed between teachers and foreign parents when teachers wanted to contact parents in order for teachers to clarify information about JSL students. Because of this context, the language counselors played a vital role in bridging the conversation gap between teachers, JSL students, and their parents.

In a visit to Ran Elementary School with Ms. Noda, the JSL teachers asked her to talk to the parents of foreign students to verify students' stories. The Ran school had three JSL classrooms and three teachers who did not speak any foreign languages. Thus, the teachers relied on what JSL students told them in daily conversations in plain and simple Japanese language, including information on parents' plans to transfer to another school or return to their home countries. Sometimes, the teachers asked upper-level JSL students to translate. However, what the students knew about their parents' decisions was limited, because these students were between 6 and 12 years old.

Teachers' requests for verification were also linked to schools' experiences of many students who transferred to other schools or returned to their home countries without giving any notice to the school. In one case, a student told teachers that the family was leaving for the home country the next day. Therefore, when teachers detected the slightest hint of such situations, they waited for Ms. Noda's next visit and asked her to talk with parents to find out their plans.

This example demonstrates how difficult it is for teachers to help JSL students due to the language barrier between JSL teachers and JSL students, and also JSL teachers and parents of these students, even if teachers want to help them. According to Ms. Noda, the Ran school focused seriously on educating JSL students and built a solid connection between JSL teachers and homeroom teachers to make arrangements for individual students. One JSL teacher in Ran also indicated that other teachers were very supportive and took part in educating JSL students in the school.

In fact, observations confirmed that JSL students in Ran would talk openly with JSL teachers about their families and friends, as well as their school life. The open conversation between JSL teachers and JSL students was a positive sign from the JSL students. A relationship was established between those two parties. However, is this relationship considered a caring relationship proposed by Noddings (1992)? Caring relationships meant the connection of two parties, a caregiver and a cared-for by which each party completes its role as a caregiver or a care receiver (Noddings, 1992). In this example, JSL teachers could be the caregivers who showed their care and provided a safe environment to let JSL students (the cared-for) talk about their lives. As a response to care given by JSL teachers, JSL students openly shared their stories.

However, in this case, their relationship alone did not compensate for the language barrier of two parties. On one hand, JSL students were able to share their stories with teachers, instead of hesitating to speak Japanese as a second language. On the other hand, these caring JSL teachers were confused about information their students gave to them in face-to-face conversations. They were trying to respond to the needs of their students; yet, they were unable to fully understand the situations of the

students. Thus, one of the prerequisites for caring, talking/dialogue in Tarlow's (1996) concept, is not fully established in this example. Noddings (1992) explains the dialogue as follows:

Dialogue is a common search for understanding, empathy, or appreciation....[Dialogue] is always a genuine quest for something undetermined at the beginning....[D]ialogue serves not only to inform the decision under consideration; it also contributes to a habit of mind—that of seeking adequate information on which to make decisions. (p. 23)

In sum, dialogue is a means to understanding between the self, the caregiver, and the other, the cared-for, and to share ideas between the two in order to make adequate decisions. In this case, the dialogue was not fully set up.

A clear dialogue with elementary school students, especially the younger ones, might be difficult regardless of the language barrier. However, in the case of Japanese students teachers can often contact their parents when they notice any sign of changes in appearance, attitudes, or behaviors. For JSL students, teachers need to contact a language counselor or translator prior to talking with the parents of JSL students. Without a translator, teachers cannot communicate with the students' parents. This example indicates that talking/dialogue is a necessary condition for caring to begin. The rest of Tarlow's caring concepts, developing sensitivity, acting in the best interest of the other, caring as feeling, caring as doing, and demonstrating reciprocity, are not completed without dialogue due to the language barrier.

Moral Decisions of Japanese Teachers to Spend Extra Time with Foreign Students

The educational philosophy of egalitarianism (Tsuneyoshi, 2003), no additional support for particular students (Gordon, 2006), and shared high level of commonalities (Tsuneyoshi, 2001) do not work for foreign students. The JSL class is one example of an additional support system that schools provide for foreign students. In Sakura, the JSL class and language counselor's visits were the only additional support for foreign students, and they were treated "equally" with their classmates based on the egalitarianism in the rest of class, except for Mr. Harada's support in his class.

Ms. Tomita, who was in charge of the JSL class and had had more experiences in interacting with JSL students, still indicated that there were limitations to teaching them in a regular academic class. Her story indicates the limitations on what one teacher can do for JSL students within the parameters of his or her daily duties, although the teacher understands the situations of these students better than other teachers. Here is Ms. Tomita's story:

When the current ninth grade students were in the seventh grade, I taught Japanese. There were two foreign students in my class. As expected it was difficult. One student could not communicate at all and went back to Brazil in the middle of the school year. That student did not understand at all and couldn't follow what I was teaching. So, I gave that student different kanji homework, but that student did not do it completely.

In addition, that student skipped one or two out of four classes scheduled for supplemental JSL class per week. If the student missed a few classes, for instance, the time for reading and understanding the contents of the reading in the textbook was still OK. But, the time for compositions or speech was troublesome if the child missed even one class because these classes need full attendance for several

consecutive sessions.

Then, in addition to missing one or two times for supplemental JSL class per week, when the language counselors came to see foreign students, the child was out of the class for that. After repeated absences for various reasons, it was not clear to me whether that student should stay in the classroom or go to the supplemental class. That student was also confused. It was very confusing for everyone.

Ms. Tomita explained that foreign students skip some regular classes to attend supplemental JSL classes and to meet counselor's visits within the timetable. Due to language barriers and skipping regular classes for JSL instruction, she understood the limitations of letting foreign students complete their assignments. Furthermore, she demonstrated the challenges involved in monitoring the irregular schedule of the foreign students in a class of 40 students, the few can easily slip through the cracks.

Ms. Tomita played the role of the homeroom teacher who focused mainly on the school life of JSL students per se, although each student had his or her own homeroom and homeroom teacher. Supplemental JSL class teachers, including Ms. Tomita, were similar to tutors, because each supplemental class had only one or two students. In a small group of one teacher and one or two students, Ms. Tomita could talk to students about their school and life at home, asking "How were your tests?" and "Do you have any plans for this winter holiday?" Because of these close engagements, she felt as if she were their homeroom teacher. In fact, Ms. Noda commented that Ms. Tomita was the only teacher among all teachers she met who eagerly tried to educate JSL students in Sakura.

According to Ms. Noda, some teachers in other schools were anxious to help foreign students. One teacher assisted a foreign student to pass his exams to enter a high school and was seen as a friend, rather than a teacher, by the foreign student's parents. The student knew the teacher's cell phone number. The teacher was with the student during the entire process of completing exam applications, going to take entrance exams, and checking admissions. In general, teachers do not follow students when they go to high schools to get exam applications, take exams, or check admissions to high schools. What Ms. Noda was talking about here was how much this teacher was committed to and supported the student beyond the teacher's regular job. When the teacher planned to help the student enter high school, other teachers doubted it could happen. Therefore, when the teacher reported that the student passed the exam and was able to enter a high school, they were all surprised.

Given this success story of the student's strong trust in the teacher and the teacher's belief in the student, Ms. Noda believed that foreign students' ability to enter high school depended heavily on the characteristics of their homeroom teachers. She also thought that a different discipline and passion for each student would guide teachers to reflect on their way of teaching and handling each student. Due to the increased enrollment of foreign students, the traditional school system has been transformed, and these changes have made people realize diverse ways of looking at issues. As a result, the realization of other options would be beneficial as well to different "other" Japanese students who do not adjust to the conventional school system.

Another instance Ms. Noda related was of a passionate elementary school teacher who looked after a foreign student even after the student's graduation from the elementary school. The teacher stopped by the junior high school everyday to talk with that student if he or she was able to catch up with classes. When the student had questions about classes, the elementary school teacher spent time at the school to try to straighten things out.

In our analyses, these two passionate teachers in Ms. Noda's story were exceptionally caring teachers. Both cases met Tarlow's all eight categories. Reciprocal relationships were observed from a care receiver, either by passing a high school exam or by asking a teacher about specific academic questions. Of particular importance in both cases is that these caring teachers provided extra support to foreign students beyond their regular duties as teachers. As Ms. Tomita indicated, there were limitations to managing needs of JSL students extensively in academic classes because of multiple roles played by each teacher in school. Yet, two passionate and engaged teachers spent extra time and energy working to ensure the academic success of their students by meeting with them outside of the school and guiding them step-by-step to make sure they were on the right track.

That time spent with students depended heavily on the moral decision of individual teachers when teachers themselves hold various duties everyday for many other students. On the other hand, foreign students needed extra support and care to become as successful as Japanese students in Japanese schools because of the language barrier and unfamiliar Japanese school rules, norms, and expectations (Tsuneyoshi, 2001).

Conclusions

This study explored ethnic Japanese teachers' challenges of establishing and maintaining a caring relationship with foreign students in the face of language and cultural barriers. Three themes that emerged were; a caring relationship between a social studies teacher and a Turkish student; difficulties in building a caring relationship without dialogue due to language barriers; and independent moral decisions of teachers to spend extra time with foreign students.

These three themes highlighted different issues relating to maintaining a caring relationship between teachers and foreign students. First, Mr. Harada and Aslan created an active learning environment in his civics class because the student showed his uniqueness in the classroom as a person from a Turkish background. In contrast, in the second theme, when JSL students had not developed a competence in Japanese language, caring teachers were not adequately able to respond to their needs. The relationship between JSL teachers and foreign students alone did not compensate for the language barrier of two parties. These data stressed the importance of a common language, in this case, Japanese, to make the caring relationship more engaging between two parties. The last example indicated that caring teachers needed to make moral decisions about whether they spent extra time and energy to support foreign students' academic success, when they also dealt with their multiple duties and expectations as teachers.

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